

Stewardship of Aquatic Lands and Water

E. KUO-HARRISON / DNR

Live-aboards

"Living on the water is a traditional part of living in the Northwest. We will ensure that it continues to be a part of our lifestyle while being sensitive to the environment those who live aboard their boats are there to enjoy."

— Commissioner Doug Sutherland

People in Washington have been living aboard their boats as long as the state has existed. Confusion arose in 2000, however, about the impact of the 1984 State Aquatic Lands Act on those who want to live aboard their boats on state-owned aquatic lands. For thousands of liveaboards across Washington there was a strong desire to clarify the law.

Working with members of the legislature, DNR began a statewide effort to take public input to clarify the Washington Administrative Code

(WAC) relating to those who live on their boats. Members of the legislature agreed to postpone any legislation clarifying the law to see if the necessary clarifications could be made through changes to the WAC.

DNR proposed new WAC language which sets clear guidelines for live-aboards, giving those who choose this lifestyle an opportunity to continue while also supporting statewide standards of environmental protection and giving local communities the option of setting local standards. DNR expects to have its proposed rule early in 2002.

Aquatic Reserves

"Washington's aquatic lands have important economic, scientific, educational and environmental value, and the Aquatic Reserve program is a tool we can use to manage them properly."

— Commissioner Doug Sutherland

As manager of 2.4 million acres of aquatic lands, the Department of Natural Resources uses a variety of tools to meet its responsibilities to provide public access, generate funds for the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account and to protect aquatic ecosystems and clean water.

The Aquatic Reserve program is an important tool in meeting those goals. State law allows the Commissioner of Public Lands to designate aquatic reserves for scientific, educational and environmental protection reasons. When five areas were designated as reserves or withdrawn from leasing in 2000, significant questions about the management of those areas were left unanswered.

The differences between the three types of reserves or between reserves and withdrawn areas needed to be defined, as did what types of activities would be allowed in each area, or whether some activities would be allowed with mitigation.

DNR currently is engaged in a process to answer these important questions and to provide a



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Photo top: Jefferson County, Rocky Point Oyster Company and volunteers helped DNR remove 1.5 tons of garbage from Dabob Bay Natural Area Preserve.

Photo bottom: DNR and Commissioner Sutherland (right) held seven meetings across the state to gather public input on the Aquatic Reserve Program.

complete and open discussion and examination of the Aquatic Reserve program. After public meetings, discussions with elected officials and interest groups, DNR will develop a program that will outline this important tool in managing aquatic lands.

Once complete, the public and other interest groups will again have an opportunity to review the options and provide input.

Natural Area Preserves and Natural Resources Conservation Areas help DNR manage important lands, and we are working to make the Aquatic Reserve program an equally powerful tool.

Forest Streams and Small Forest Landowners

"Family forests are an important part of the mosaic of forestland in Washington State. The Riparian Easement Program helps provide important environmental protection for fish and streams while giving family forest landowners the opportunity to continue responsibly harvesting and provides an alternative to development."

— Commissioner Doug Sutherland

When the State Legislature passed the landmark Forests & Fish legislation in 1999, it recognized that family forest landowners may have difficulty meeting the rules and as a result may convert forestland to commercial or residential uses.

Family forest landowners in Washington own nearly 20 percent of the state's total commercial forestlands, providing food and shelter for many of Washington's fish, bird, mammal and amphibian species.

Washington's Forest Riparian Easement Program compensates these landowners for protecting streamside trees that improve water quality and enhance habitat for salmon and other endangered fish.



K. HANSON / DNR

Photo: In 2001, DNR issued the first easement under the Forest Riparian Easement Program. The program helps small forest landowners protect habitat in and along streams. Although riparian areas are uplands, they are critical for fish habitat. The vegetation in a healthy riparian area shades the water, keeping stream temperatures cool, and prevents sediment from entering the stream. Vegetation that falls into the stream provides nutrients and places for young fish to hide.

Effective June 1, 2001, state forest practices regulations require all forestland owners to exempt from timber harvest a minimum number of trees growing near streams, wetlands and other water bodies.

In exchange for compensation, participating landowners grant a 50-year easement to the state for designated riparian trees and the ecological protections they provide.

The easement program creates economic incentives for up to 90,000 small forest landowners to keep their land in forestry use. At present, Washington's

non-industrial timber lands are being converted to non-forest use at a rate of about 100 acres a day. During the course of one year, that removes from forestry use about 56 square miles — two-thirds the size of Seattle.

To learn more, contact DNR's Small Forest Landowner Office at: 360-902-1391, e-mail sflo@wadnr.gov, or visit their website at www.wa.gov/dnr/sflo